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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The listing below of the claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the present application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A method of cooling strip or wire products subsequent to being annealed, said method comprising the steps of:

providing a rotatable cooling drum immediately downstream of an annealing path, wherein the drum has a predetermined outer diameter;

placing the drum in a closed housing that includes a product inlet opening and a product outlet opening;

providing a shielding gas atmosphere within the closed housing and around the cooling drum, wherein the shielding gas atmosphere is provided at an overpressure relative to atmospheric pressure;

winding the product around ~~a the~~ cooling drum ~~immediately downstream of an annealing path~~ a plurality of turns so that the product lies in mutual juxtaposed turns on the drum;

cooling the product to a desired temperature of from about 20°C to about 50°C below the oxidation temperature of the material; and

maintaining the product as it is cooled within a curved path that against the outer diameter of the drum and within the shielding gas atmosphere, wherein the drum has a an outer diameter that is greater than a diameter at which a radius of curvature of the wound product is influenced mechanically by plastic deformation ;
~~and wherein the drum has a diameter that exceeds the diameter at which the~~

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~~product is influenced mechanically by plastic deformation.~~

Claim 2 (canceled)

Claim 3 (currently amended): A method according to Claim 2 1, wherein the shielding gas atmosphere is selected from the group consisting of argon, hydrogen, and nitrogen gas and combinations and mixtures thereof.

Claim 4 (previously presented): A method according to claim 1, including the step of cooling the drum by forced convection of the atmosphere surrounding the drum.

Claim 5 (currently amended): A method ~~of cooling strip or wire products subsequent to being annealed, said method comprising the steps of: winding the product around a cooling drum immediately downstream of an annealing path so that the product lies in mutual juxtaposed turns on the drum; cooling the product to a desired temperature of from about 20°C to about 50°C below the oxidation temperature of the material; wherein the drum has a diameter that exceeds a diameter at which the product is influenced mechanically by plastic deformation; and according to claim 1, including the step of cooling an inner wall of the drum by introducing an external coolant into the drum to increase the rate of cooling of the product.~~

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Claim 6 (previously presented): A method according to claim 1, including the step of constructing the drum from a metallic material.

Claim 7 (previously presented): A method according to claim 1, including the step of rotating the drum with a drive motor.

Claim 8 (currently amended): An arrangement for cooling strip or wire material products where the product is cooled after having been annealed, said arrangement comprising: a rotatable cooling drum positioned immediately downstream of an annealing path for receiving on a drum outer surface a plurality of peripheral surface turns of the product that are wound such that the turns of the product are mutually juxtaposed for cooling the product to a desired temperature of from about 20°C to about 50°C below the oxidation temperature of the material; a closed housing around the drum, the housing including a product inlet opening and a product outlet opening; means for providing a shielding gas atmosphere within the closed housing; and means for maintaining the product during cooling in a curved path that around the outer diameter of the drum and within the shielding gas atmosphere, wherein the drum has a an outer diameter that is greater than a diameter at which a radius of curvature of the wound product is influenced mechanically by plastic deformation ; wherein the drum has a diameter which exceeds the diameter at which the product is influenced mechanically by plastic deformation.

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Claim 9 (canceled)

Claim 10 (currently amended): An arrangement according to Claim 8, including means for introducing into the housing a shielding gas atmosphere selected from the group consisting of argon, hydrogen, and nitrogen gas, and combinations and mixtures thereof.

Claim 11 (previously presented): An arrangement according to claim 8, wherein the drum is cooled by forced convection of the atmosphere surrounding the drum.

Claim 12 (currently amended): ~~An arrangement for cooling strip or wire material products where the product is cooled after having been annealed, said arrangement comprising: a drum positioned immediately downstream of an annealing path for receiving on a drum peripheral surface turns of the product such that the turns of the product will be mutually juxtaposed for cooling the product to a desired temperature of from about 20°C to about 50°C below the oxidation temperature of the material; wherein the drum has a diameter which exceeds a diameter at which the product is influenced mechanically by plastic deformation; according to claim 8, wherein an inner wall of the drum is cooled by an external coolant that is introduced to cool the inside of the drum to increase the rate of cooling of the product.~~

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Claim 13 (previously presented): An arrangement according to Claim 12, wherein the drum is made of a metallic material.

Claim 14 (previously presented): An arrangement according to claim 8, wherein the drum is motor-driven.